

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

January 12, 2000 LB 482

an existing facility be renovated or a new building be built to house a Parole Revocation program. In addition, operating funds are provided to begin a Wilderness Camp program for juvenile offenders. Both of these efforts address an overcrowding at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers and will allow current staff to more effectively treat those youth who are properly admitted there for care. I am also proposing the continuation of a pilot program called the Learning Extensions program created through a partnership with the Omaha Public Schools, Omaha Together One Community, and the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. The goal is to increase parental involvement and, thereby, improve the child's academic performance through this program. In my budget modification, I add nearly \$28 million to cover child-care expansions that occurred without your approval and before I came to office. Please be assured of my disapproval of the practice of making administrative expansion of programs that involve fundamental policy issues without your authorization. I can, and will, address some administrative issues that can make this program more sensible. But, together, we must engage in a policy debate to decide an appropriate level of benefits that ensure fiscal stability for this program and that provides a benefit for Nebraskans who are truly in need. As a state, we continue to experience more children being placed into our custody. Therefore, an additional \$11 million is sought to cover this cost. We will initiate an all-out effort to secure federal matching funds to lessen the impact on the General Fund. Additional funds are also being set aside to finance Kids Connection to be sure that children in low-income families have adequate healthcare. Further, I am asking that you pass LB 482, which provides adoption assistance for families who adopt state wards. Our goal must be to provide a permanent family for each child in our custody who is ready for adoption. I am also putting funds in the budget for an additional Foster Care Review Board specialist to monitor the placement of children in out-of-home care. I set aside funding necessary to establish the State Disbursement Unit for child support payments, as required by federal law. And I have proposed legislation to implement a School-to-Career program and to provide new support for youth mentoring. Finally, today, I am announcing that I have directed the Lieutenant Governor and the Health and Human Services Policy Secretary to form a team to address the question